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ON THE ORDER OF WORDS IN LATIN PROSE¹

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In a paper read before the Classical Conference at Ann Arbor in April, 1907,² attention was called to some of the ways in which our current methods of studying Latin syntax have been modified, or should be modified, in consequence of certain radical changes that have taken place in our understanding of the nature and structure of the sentence. The present paper points out in very general terms some of the ways in which our ideas about word-order are affected by the newer views of sentence-structure. It is hoped that the paper will be of service to teachers of Latin, particularly in secondary schools, who are endeavoring to discover the reasons for the order of words in any given sentence or to explain the same to their pupils. Such a paper would seem to be called for in view of the fact that the subject is of necessity treated very summarily in our brief school grammars, and the statements found in these books are not only various but often contradictory.³ Lack of precision and vagueness are reflected even in the technical terms employed to designate various "kinds of word-order." For example terms so widely divergent in meaning as "normal," "grammatical," "usual," "customary," "traditional," etc., are used to designate one group of cases, in opposition to the terms "rhetorical," "occasional," "inverted," "emphatic," etc. The teacher who is sufficiently broad-minded to examine other textbooks than the ones used in his classes can scarcely fail to be confused by the various points of view from which the different writers approach the subject and the lack of precision and exactness with which conditions are described.

¹ See Proceedings of the Classical Conference at Ann Arbor, Mich., April, 1908, in the *School Review*, Vol. XVII, p. 45.

² See *School Review*, Vol. XV (1907), pp. 754 ff.

³ On this point see Greene, "Emphasis in Latin Prose," *School Review*, Vol. XV (1907), pp. 643 ff.

In the more recent definitions and descriptions of the sentence found in various works on language and in psychologies, notably, for example, James' *Psychology* and Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* (Vol. II, Part I), attention is directed less than was formerly the case to the "finished product" found in books. The sentence is now looked upon as a transitory, vanishing mental process, or, rather, as a series of such processes. At any rate, even if it seems wise for the purpose of definition to limit the term sentence to the "linguistic expression"⁴ of thought and feeling, yet all distinctly realize that he who undertakes the investigation of any syntactical problem—and the problems of word-order are syntactical problems—must direct his attention mainly to the *inner* form of the sentence, that is, to the thought and feeling which are symbolized by the outer form. The sentence is not simply a "union" (or even a "uniting"), "combining," "Verbindung" of previously separated elements into a complete thought—not simply a "putting together of words." The general thought which the sentence is to symbolize is more or less clearly felt *before* the actual formulation (or utterance) of the sentence begins; that is to say, we have a more or less distinct idea of what we are about to say even before we begin to speak. The sentence proper is the act of organizing this indefinite mass of thought and feeling. The act of organizing consists both in the analysis of the mass into its elements, and in consciously setting these elements into their relations to each other. The process is therefore a double one: it is both analytic and synthetic. As each one of these elements in succession is lifted out of the general mass of unanalyzed thought, it is brought clearly before the mind and is seen in its relations to the other elements already thus treated. In ordinary conversation the muscular movements of the organs of speech (i. e., the sentence considered merely as a symbol) attend the organizing process more or less mechanically. The order of words in such discourse will normally correspond to the order in which the successive elements are apperceived, and the reasons for the order are accordingly to be

⁴I. e., to the muscular movements of the vocal organs in the broader sense of this term.

sought in the conditions that determine the order in which the various elements are brought into the "focal point" of consciousness.

The order of words that results from these conditions may quite properly be called the spontaneous or natural order. The term natural order in this sense of the word will include practically all the cases classified in our grammars under the rubrics grammatical, usual, normal, etc., it being remembered that these rubrics include, among others, examples of what may with some justification be called the "fixed" order, such as the position of the preposition in relation to the substantive. Such instances of fixed order are merely habits consequent upon the persistent recurrence of certain conditions yielding a given order of words. As is well known, they play a comparatively small part in Latin, but they are generally felt to be more important than they really are and both their influence and character are often inexactly estimated. In addition to these cases the natural order will include a great deal, perhaps much the larger part, of the cases described as examples of the emphatic or rhetorical order; because in normal discourse the emphatic words in a sentence, not less than the unemphatic ones, owe their positions to the normal activities that constitute this organizing process. From this it appears that the traditional contrast drawn between "usual," "grammatical" order as a regular order and "emphatic" as an irregular and exceptional one, is misleading and in large part without foundation. The emphatic order is neither less usual nor less traditional nor less normal than the unemphatic order.

The term normal or spontaneous order is here used to include a wider range of phenomena than might at first seem to be implied by the word spontaneous. We know that an author frequently alters and changes this order resulting from the original act of organizing the sentence; and he may do this either during the progress of the original act (in which case the operation is interrupted for a time and then resumed) or after the sentence has been completed. As a rule such a change is due to the fact that an author, for one reason or another, changes the subject-matter of his sentence. New ideas may be suggested to him

or he may see new relationships between the ideas already existing in the sentence, and he alters his diction in order to give them adequate expression. But neither the mental processes involved in such altered arrangements of words, nor the motives that lead to them, are essentially different in character from the original process of organizing. They are just as spontaneous and just as natural as the earlier act and should not be looked upon as irregular, abnormal, and arbitrary. The sentence in its finished form usually gives no evidence that such a change has been made.

However, it is desirable, at least from the point of view of the student of style, to distinguish between this natural or spontaneous order and what we may term an artificial order—a change which a writer makes for the purpose of conforming to the rules of formal grammar or rhetoric. Such cases are not rare. For example we find in a given sentence a series of twelve nouns and adjectives arranged in the order A N A N, N A N A, N A A N. This certainly savors of artificiality. To such cases may be added many (though no one would venture to say *all*) the cases in which words appear to have been changed from their natural position in order to secure such a cadence as — ◡ — ◡ — or — ◡ — ◡ —. Yet even here we must avoid drawing too sharp a line. The specific order of words that results in a given case is not and cannot be wholly new or wholly unlike instances of word-order, which in the previous history of the language have frequently occurred in the normal process of organizing. Otherwise the new order would not only be inconsistent with the community's grammatical sense, but would in all likelihood be unintelligible. Again it frequently happens that such an artificial change may be so frequently employed by the first person who used it or by others either following his example or independently of him, that it becomes first a "fad," then a habit, and so gradually passes over into a mechanized, i. e., spontaneous or natural order. To draw a line of demarkation at any point in the formation of this habit would be wholly arbitrary. Thus the artificial order has its basis in the natural order and under favorable conditions passes over into it.

Bearing in mind the need of abandoning the (largely arti-

ficial) distinction between "normal" and "emphatic," we should also bear in mind the important influence exercised over word-order by the unit of thought⁵ continually present in the mind during the process of organizing the sentence. The writer recalls how on one occasion a pupil explaining in the classroom the reason for the position of a certain word, spoke of its being influenced by another word farther along toward the end of the sentence. The teacher corrected him with the remark, "That cannot be true, because Caesar has not come to that word in his sentence." Our book-reading, grammar-studying, and dictionary-consulting habits have had a large influence in shaping our ideas of language. For example, on the printed page each word is distinctly marked off from the others, and we sometimes even meet with sharp criticism either for "omitting the hyphen" or for using it instead of a space. Who has forgotten the struggle waged over the two spellings *to-day* and *today*? Again we find words standing alone, i. e., out of context, in the dictionary and described as having a meaning quite apart from any sentence, as if a word had any existence as a word outside of discourse; and in general, when we set about the study of a word, we abstract it from its sentence and, considering it as something which has a permanent and separate existence, say that its meaning is "modified by the context." We go even farther. We learn, for example, that the letter *a* in *faciat* is the "sign of the subjunctive mood," and become so accustomed to think of the subjunctive force as residing in this sign that we overlook the part (often more important) which other elements of the sentence play in symbolizing the mood-idea. In this way we have carried the analysis of discourse to an extreme degree of detail and have come to direct our thought so exclusively to the elements of discourse thus arbitrarily separated from each other, that we have grown into the habit of quite ignoring the fact, that in the organizing of a sentence in actual experience the concept (idea)

⁵ By "unit of thought" is meant the mass of thought and feeling that constitutes the basis of the sentence, both in the vague unorganized form which it has before the formulation of the sentence begins and in the clearer and more definite forms which it assumes during the process of formulation.

with which a word is specially associated and to the expression of which it more than any other word contributes, exists in the mind not merely at the time the word-image exists or at the time the word is spoken, but in changing form it is present⁶ more or less clearly during a large part or even during the whole time occupied by the organizing of the sentence. The concepts do not exist successively but simultaneously—side by side. Consequently not only in one concept inseparable from the other concepts of the sentence, but its particular form and qualities lie in large part in its relations to them, and it will be symbolized in part by the words that symbolized the other concepts; while, vice versa, these latter consist in part in their relations to the given one. So it comes about that a given concept (what we commonly call the “meaning of a word”) finds expression not merely in the one word which we usually associate with it, but in other words of the same sentence or even of adjacent sentences; and on the other hand each word not only symbolizes the concept with which it is mainly associated but contributes to the expression of others as well. The bearing of this upon word-order is self-evident. The numerous and intricate links of association which bind the various concepts into a unity are among the most important factors that determine the order in which the concepts are brought up into the clearer field of consciousness—an order which corresponds to the natural or spontaneous order of words. As these relations are always intricate and complex, the student of word-order should endeavor to discover not *the reason*, as if only one reason should be assumed to exist, but *the reasons* for the given order, giving weight not only to those elements which have already passed into the clearer field of consciousness, but also to those not yet organized. It usually happens in any given case that some one factor is of greater importance than others in determining the order of words, but these others are by no means to be overlooked or disregarded. Our school grammars, it is true, as a rule state several motives of word-order, but in consequence of their brevity they fail to make it clear that more than one reason may and ordinarily does apply in a given case.

⁶ Part of the time, perhaps, only in its effects.

Here, as elsewhere, one should avoid a one-sided point of view.

Aside from this influence, or, perhaps we should rather say, inseparably from this influence which the synthetic unity of apperception, as it has been styled, exercises over the order of words, the spontaneous arrangement of words is determined very largely by the prior apperceptions of the dominating elements of the sentence. In the organization of the sentence those elements will first pass into the clearer field of consciousness and hence will occupy the earlier positions in the sentence, which for one reason or another most strongly fix the attention. The pressure or, to speak figuratively, claim for recognition which the various elements of the unorganized unit of thought put forth, depends in part upon the elements of thought which enter into them, in part upon their emotional tone and in part by the state of mind of the speaker, in so far as that represents the product of all his past experiences. Such elements are called the predominating elements of a sentence. They are often identical with what the grammarians term emphatic words, but not necessarily so. It would seem that grammarians in dealing with the subject of word-order have not distinguished with sufficient accuracy between dominating elements and emphatic words, but assuming the identity of the two and laying down the rule that "the first position in the sentence is the most emphatic, the second next emphatic, and so on" have propagated a doctrine which is in part misleading and in part erroneous, and which admits of being carried to ludicrous extremes in the classroom. The bonds of association existing between the various elements of a sentence are among the most important factors that determine the "pressure for recognition" exerted by a concept at any given moment. In fact they are frequently of much greater importance than the factor of "emphasis."

As is well known the "fixed" order of words is due to the mechanizing or automatizing of the mental processes in consequence of which a given process, when frequently repeated, tends to be transformed from an act of will or an impulsive act into an automatic one. One of the most difficult groups of problems met in the study of word-order in Latin consists in the

proper estimation of the extent to which such mechanized activities have entered in as determining factors.

These general statements will perhaps be made clearer and more specific by some concrete examples. In the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, I, 8*ex*, we find the following words:⁷ "ab rebus ipsis *beniuolum efficiamus auditorem*, si. . . ." The italicized words exemplify a very common type of word-order. We find it repeated in I1*p*, "aut *beniuolum aut attentum aut docilem faciamus auditorem*," and I1*ex*, "quod neque *beniuolum neque docilem neque ad tentum facit auditorem*." The order is generally known as one type of hyperbaton. Examples abound in Cicero: e. g., *Pro Archia poeta*, I8, "Ennius sanctos appellat poetas, quod ;" I1, "eisdem (*sc.* 'regionibus') omnes cogitationes terminaret suas." It is frequent earlier than Cicero: e. g., Sisenna (*apud* Non., *s. v.* 'volgus'), "imperitum concitat volgum;" (*s. v.* 'propriam'), "propriam capere non potuerat quietem;" Claud. Quadrigarius, *Ann.*, I (*apud* Gell., 8, 13, 4*f*), "pugnae facta est pausa;" Cato, *Orig.*, 2 (*apud* Prisc., III, pp. 129, 337, K), "si quis mortuos est Arpinatis;" *Lex Silica* (*ca.* 240 B. C.), "sex sextari congius siet uini." Numerous cases are found in Greek literature, as in Antigonos of Commagenes, I, *εἰς χρόνον ἂν ἔγραψεν αἰώνιον*; Polybius, 3, I, IO, *ἐν ἴσῳ περιέβαλε διαστήματι*; Lysias, *Acc. Phil.*, *ἐν ᾧ μέρος ἐτύγγανε τῶν πολλῶν ὄν*. From Cicero's time on they became very numerous: Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum*, 6, 40, 3, "eundem omnes ferunt casum;" Livy, 7, 9, "in Veientem porrexit hostem;" Petronius, 84, "solas exstruere diuitias curant;" Censorinus, *De die natali*, 7, 2, "idemque (*sc.* 'dentes') post septimum cadunt annum;" Hier-Euseb., *anno* 1922, "Romanos testamento reliquit heredes;" Arnobius, 5, I, "invidiosam venturis opposuisse fallaciam."

A careful examination of the above examples and other similar cases will show that the order of words is due to a variety of causes. In some cases it is apparent that the order is due chiefly to the prior apperception of the predominating element

⁷ The following discussion is necessarily very brief, and takes account of only the principal points involved.

of the sentence taken in connection with the intimate association between the so-called predicate accusative and the verbs *facio*, *efficio*, *reddo*, *puto*, *apello*, etc.⁸ If such a predicate accusative is the dominating element of that part of the sentence in which it stands, the inevitable order (in the absence of other disturbing influences) will be pred. acc.—verb—object.⁹ In other cases the order has been in the main determined by a desire to secure a *clausula* (i. e., rhythmic close) at the end of the sentence. In still other cases other reasons are noticeable, but in all the cases the result is an order of words in which the verb occupies a position one or two words removed from the end of the sentence between two words which represent closely related concepts. It seems evident that the very frequent occurrence of hyperbatons of their type resulted in a sort of fashion (or fad, perhaps) of giving the verb the next to the final position in the sentence. This order is especially frequent in the later literature, although probably not so common as to become a partially “fixed” order.

The above instances of word-order and others like them are spoken of by grammarians as “special rhetorical devices,” “a displacement of words,” “a violent displacement of words,” etc., and are classified under the rubrics “rhetorical,” “unusual,” “emphatic,” and the like, being regarded as exceptions or violations of the rules. From what has been said above, it will be apparent, however, that not all such hyperbatons are examples of “violent displacements of words;” and, in fact, it may be doubted whether *violent* displacements are to be found at all in Latin literature. Possibly such exist. There are numerous cases in which we cannot now discover any particular, normal conditions to explain the given order. In such cases it is conceivable that the writer modified an original order with the intention of securing a

⁸ In Caesar and Cicero, for example, the cases in which the predicate accusative is adjacent to the verbs *facio* and *efficio*, the direct object occupying a more remote position, are twenty-five to thirty times as frequent as the reverse order (pred. acc.—dir. obj.—verb). This preponderance shows that the order had become mechanical to a large extent. In fact several quasi-compound words have resulted from it, such as *certiorem facere*, *missum facere*, *planum facere*.

⁹ See *Proceedings of American Philological Association*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. xxxi f.

hyperbaton. Yet even this act could not have been purely arbitrary, but must have had its basis in previously existing conditions.

It may not be superfluous to cite a few more hyperbatons which are clearly due to natural causes: Cicero, *Pro Plancio*, 101, "O excubias tuas, Gn. Planci, miseras;" Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 2, 143, "excelsis undique partibus saepiuntur;" Cato, *Origines*, p. 76, 19, P, "vulnus capiti nullum evenit;" p. 80, 9, P, "mons ex sale mero magnus;" *De agricultura*, 37, 5, "ligna in caminum ficulnea;" Cicero, *In Verrem*, 5, 113, "graviolem apud sapientis indices se fore ab inferis testem;" Caesar, *Bel. Gal.*, 2, 11, "hac re statim Caesar per exploratores cognita." In all these examples normal reasons for the order may be seen, partly even in the fragmentary form in which they are here cited and partly by examining them in their context. The "hyperbatons" are, so to speak, by-products, incidental results of the organizing process, and are not to be thought of as purposefully employed devices for securing rhetorical effects or as violent displacements of words. They can be spoken of as exceptions only in the sense that they do not, perhaps, occur so frequently as the order in which the objective is adjacent to the substantive. But this relative infrequency is due merely to the fact that the conditions that result in the more common order are of more frequent occurrence. As the relative infrequency of these cases in no way justifies us in regarding them as abnormal, so in general an "emphatic" order is no less normal than an "unemphatic" one. Least of all would we be justified in calling such instances of natural order as the above alterations or changes from the more frequently occurring order. In such cases the conditions that result in the more frequent order do not and could not exist in consciousness.

In this connection it may be noted that the contrast between the "regular" and "exceptional" (i. e., emphatic or rhetorical) order is made the basis of description in practically all the chapters on arrangement of words printed in our Latin grammars. The contrast has been greatly exaggerated. The general impression given by these chapters is, that there is a power or influence

somewhere back in one's consciousness that would arrange the words in a given constant order, e. g., object before verb, adjective before noun, if the speaker or writer did not interfere with its activity and put the words in a different order. It has usually been regarded as the grammarian's business to lay down rules, and our innate "logical sense" leads us to look for order and regularity everywhere in language and to separate the regular from the irregular. Besides this we are quite likely to have our ideas of Latin word-order more or less strongly influenced by our feeling for the "fixed" arrangement of the modern languages. As a consequence we have laid too much stress upon the above-mentioned contrast and have assumed the existence of a much larger number of types of "usual" word-order than actually exist. Although there exist a few such approximately fixed types, we have from time to time been disillusioned with respect to others supposed to exist. Probably the most notable case is that of the order of adjective and substantive. Extensive statistics exist on this point, and if similar statistics were collected on the position of the verb, they would in all likelihood show that, on an average, in not more than 50 per cent. to 80 per cent.¹⁰ of all cases does the verb stand at the end of the sentence. Indeed two of the authors of very recent Latin grammars have consistently avoided the words "generally," "usually," etc., in their sections on the order of words and instead of them have employed the term *normal*¹¹ because, as one of them says, the actual majority of cases under a given class may perfectly well be on the side of the rhetorical order, and furthermore the "so-called normal arrangement is really rare."

The harmful results of the traditional method of treatment are increased by such statements as the following: "Words are arranged to secure emphasis," "chiefly to show which are the most emphatic words," "the grammatical order has for its object, clearness, the rhetorical arrangement has for its objects, empha-

¹⁰ At any rate extensive tests point in this direction.

¹¹ This change in nomenclature, however, goes only a small way toward improving matters. Indeed, Professor Hale, one of those who employs it, clearly indicates his dissatisfaction with the term by employing in one very critical passage the expression "*so-called normal arrangement*."

sis and rhythm." Such statements not only give the student the impression that the so-called emphatic and rhetorical order is the result of a change from or violation of a regular order, but also lead him to suppose that it is a change purposely introduced by the author to secure some effect or other. He thus comes to feel that the Latin order of words is largely *artificial*. While no one would deny that there are many examples of the modified arrangement to be found in Latin literature (more, of course, in some authors than in others), yet we should take every legitimate means of preventing the pupil from supposing that under normal conditions the author of a given sentence was conscious at the time he composed it, that some given word or class of words (say, for example, the verb) should (or would) naturally occupy a given position, but that he intentionally varied or departed from that arrangement. As a matter of common experience, when we utter (or formulate) a given sentence, our attention is completely absorbed by it and we have no consciousness of the position which the verb may have occupied in a sentence uttered a day, an hour, or even a minute before. There is nothing approaching a conscious comparison between the position of the word in the present instance and that which it occupied in a previous one. Memory-images or mechanized tendencies resulting from previous experiences may enter into our present experience and even be present as conditions determining the word-order, but we do not recognize them in their quality as elements of the past experience. The "exceptions" to usual arrangements of words exist for the most part only in the mind of the student who finds the different experiences recorded on the printed page and makes a comparison of them. The unhappy pupil who is possessed of this one-sided view will find the greatest difficulties in explaining or understanding the Latin order of words. Closely associated with this is the practice, not infrequently resorted to, of arguing from averages. We have in mind, for example, a paper on word-order, in which the author, after citing one example in support of his theory, adds, "but we are not concerned at this point to analyze particular examples; the argument is from averages." Such arguments

are, however, very fallacious, for the very simple reason that any given sentence is a transitory process which never recurs. So the conditions that determine the order of words differ in each and every sentence. Very similar conditions may occur, but that the same ones should recur is inconceivable; and the differences that exist between similar sentences (both as regards the links of association formed and the sensations and feelings involved) are so great that the student should never fail to make an endeavor at least to estimate their value; in any case, he should assume for purposes of investigation that each sentence offers a problem distinct from all others. Suppose that on a given page of Livy the verbs occupy the final position in their respective sentences or clauses eighteen times, the initial or medial position seventeen times, on another page nineteen and twenty times respectively, on a third eighteen and eleven. So it might turn out by actual count that the average figures per page for the whole of Livy are eighteen and one-third and fifteen and two-thirds respectively. What light has in this way been thrown on the reasons for the position of the verb in any given sentence? We have only shown that the order is not fixed—a fact which everybody knew before. The examination into the positions occupied by verbs in Latin should take account of the meaning of the verb, the relation of the concept it represents to other concepts of the sentence and of adjacent sentences, the kind of discourse (descriptive, narrative, etc.) of which the sentence forms a part, the emotional tone of the sentence, the mechanizing of the mental processes. We must also inquire how far the order of the verb is conditioned by that taken by other words in the sentence. So numerous are the considerations of this kind that should enter into the student's investigation, so various will be the conditions existing in different sentences that he should regard each case as a separate problem, and should endeavor to account for the given arrangement on the basis of the specific conditions existing in the context. Only after this has been done will he be justified in taking into account the conditions found in other similar sentences, and the utmost caution should be observed in applying these conditions to the explanation of the arrangement in the

previous sentence. In the absence of specific and clear evidence that a given case of arrangement is the result of a modification of the order of organization, an effort should always be made to find normal conditions to account for the given arrangement; always bearing in mind at the same time that even modified arrangements are not wholly arbitrary, that, for example, no rhetorician ever invented the hyperbaton or the climax, but that these forms of order have existed from the earliest times and have been merely described, employed, and elaborated by the rhetoricians.

As language is essentially a social institution and as every speaker and writer aims primarily to make himself understood, there is always an effort (conscious or unconscious) on his part to adjust his discourse to the intelligence and character of his audience. In the above paper nothing has been said of this aspect of the problem, because the existence of such a tendency in the mind and the specific ways in which it influences the organization of the thought are elements of the normal mental activities.

The writer will have accomplished his purpose if he shall have led any of his readers to take a step in the direction of working out a plan of teaching the arrangement of words in Latin less artificial and more rational than the traditional one.